

And here I would like to take this opportunity to thank President Clinton for all the efforts that he's exerting on the Syrian track, the Lebanese track, and of course, on our Palestinian track.

Q. Mr. Chairman, what do you think of the President's remark, which was said earlier at the State Department—so it must be U.S. policy, we're hearing it all over town now—that nobody can expect 100 percent, that there has to be some compromise. You know, we've just had an experience with Syria insisting on 100 percent, and the talks are now suspended. Will you settle for less than 100 percent of your demands?

President Clinton. I don't agree with that, by the way, that characterization of the question in the Syrian-Israeli talks.

Q. Okay.

Chairman Arafat. The negotiations is the best way. This is what happened with Egypt; this is what happened with Jordan; and this is what will happen with Syria, as well as Lebanon; and also it happened with the Palestinians with the help of President Clinton.

Q. Missing the deadline of February, will that inevitably mean the missing of the deadline of September, too, or will you work not to do that?

President Clinton. I don't think anything is inevitable here. I think that both these leaders and these parties are absolutely committed to resolving this in the most expeditious possible way. So I think we should always let them speak

for themselves and make their own decisions, and I'll do my best to be helpful.

Q. [*Inaudible*—comprehensive peace in the Middle East in that one year?

President Clinton. Well, we certainly could have, and I'll be disappointed if we don't, because we have the leaders who can do it, the issues are clear—even if they're difficult, they're clear. And I certainly think we could have it, and I'm going to do everything I can, every day I've got, to try to achieve it.

Israel-Syria Peace Talks

Q. Mr. President, when can we expect talks on the Syrian tracks to be resumed?

President Clinton. I think they'll both have something to say about that before long. I think they'll keep working right along. This is not—you shouldn't overreact to what has been said about this. I think they're both completely determined to get this resolved in an appropriate way. And I think they'll have things to say about it as we go along here. But don't read too much into this. Actually, the parties have a framework for making these decisions that's more clear and more bridgeable than I would have thought by now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on James and Sally Barksdale's Pledge to the University of Mississippi

January 20, 2000

Hillary and I applaud James and Sally Barksdale for their dedication and leadership on behalf of the cause of literacy. Their generous pledge of \$100 million to the University of Mississippi will provide schoolchildren in that State—especially those in the most needy schools—with access to new reading programs,

train teachers in reading education, and promote efforts to target and help students struggling to learn to read. Their generosity is an example of the extraordinary role philanthropy plays in providing a better future for our children, families, and country.